

# ABOUT THE SMITHSONIAN AAG

The Archives of American Gardens (AAG) was established to provide scholars, researchers, and interested persons with visual documentation of cultural, historic, and vernacular gardens. Continue reading and scroll to the bottom of this page to learn more.

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AAG's primary mission, in conjunction with The Garden Club of America's Garden History & Design Committee, is to collect unique, high quality images and documentation relating to a wide variety of cultivated gardens throughout the United States that are not documented elsewhere. In this way, AAG strives to preserve and highlight a meaningful compendium of significant aspects of gardening in the United States for the benefit of researchers and the public today and in the future. Every moment a garden exists it is subject to the forces of change, loss, and, in some cases, destruction. A familiar and beloved garden today may become a distant memory in just a matter of a few years (or, in the case of a natural disaster, a few hours). Even the most meticulously maintained garden evolves over time to the point where it deviates from its earlier incarnation. Unless gardens are photographed and their origins and life span documented, the thought, creativity, care and labor that goes into them may be lost forever.

Gardens seldom follow a regimented design formula; they echo and highlight the region, culture, history and personal tastes that influence them. Despite their uniqueness, gardens are such a subtle and natural part of our surroundings they are often taken for granted and may not be "noticed" until they are in danger of disappearing or are gone completely. Documenting a garden helps to address the importance of recognizing its particular

significance. It may take years for this recognition to occur, but when it does, it is crucial to have images to study in order to understand and appreciate the thought process and work involved in the garden's creation. Indeed, the most frequently used portion of The Garden Club of America Collection at the Archives of American Gardens are the glass lantern slides that were created in the 1920s and 1930s. Only the foresight of The Garden Club of America to photograph what were then 'contemporary gardens' saved these gardens from total oblivion.